

This special threat advisory is intended to provide situational awareness of threats to public order, public safety, and the security of public officials arising from violent online rhetoric opposing new and ongoing public health restrictions (Information current as of 15 February 2022, 1000hrs). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates as required.

SPECIAL THREAT ADVISORY – UPDATE 7

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022: THREAT ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

KEY POINTS

- The Freedom Convoy continues to force the closure of downtown Ottawa streets. Solidarity actions with international implications arising from convoy demonstrations have occurred at border crossings in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario.
- Some observed symbols at convoy protests may be in reference to certain movements involving ideologically motivated violent extremism. While the majority of protestors have denounced violence, the possibility of a lone actor attack cannot be discounted. The seizure of a cache of weapons and ammunition at the Coutts border blockade underscores the potential willingness to use serious violence.
- Logistical support provided by former military and law enforcement to convoy organizers and occupation-style encampments providing material support highlight an increasing level of sophistication and organization among this movement. The assistance of such individuals may inspire ideologically motivated individuals to recruit past or present members of law enforcement or government organizations whose skill sets could be leveraged to circumvent enforcement action.

INTRODUCTION

The Freedom Convoy 2022 protest continues to disrupt daily life in Ottawa. Ottawa Police have warned protesters of enforcement for illegal activities and have laid 26 criminal charges and issued over 2600 tickets in relation to the convoy demonstrations as of February 13. On February 14, the Prime Minister (PM) invoked the *Emergencies Act* to address ongoing convoy demonstrations across multiple jurisdictions.

This Special Threat Advisory (STA) focuses on threat environment factors observed and detected in relation to convoy demonstrations.

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Federal Policing National Intelligence – Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

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NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Nationwide solidarity actions continue. Protest activities affecting Ports of Entry (POE) have occurred in the past week in Surrey (British Columbia), Coutts (Alberta), Emerson (Manitoba), and Windsor (Ontario). Protest activities also occurred near the POEs in Regway (Saskatchewan) and Niagara (Ontario), although protesters did not blockade these particular border crossings. The blockades at international borders are likely attempts at forming national solidarity with convoy protesters in Ottawa, conducted under the perception that affecting critical transportation and economic infrastructure may pressure governments to repeal public health restrictions.

In general terms, shorter-term demonstrations across the country (e.g., those which have lasted a few hours in duration) have been more peaceful in nature. The longer-term demonstrations, such as the protests in Ottawa and at the Coutts and Windsor borders, have become more adversarial and hostile over time.

Dynamic factors continue to cause concern and may be exacerbated with police enforcement.^a The convoy movement facilitates an ideologically charged environment in which individuals who hold grievances towards public health restrictions may feel this is their one chance to express their frustrations. The movement, given its widespread reach, is attracting individuals who may hold ideologically motivated violent extremist (IMVE) beliefs and may feel emboldened in their views amid the movement's perceived popularity by national and international supporters.

SYMBOLISM OBSERVED AT CONVOY DEMONSTRATIONS

While not all individuals participating in convoy protests adhere to IMVE beliefs, the presence of IMVE adherents has been observed in a few instances, raising the potential for public and/or officer safety concerns. Flags, stickers, and other iconography with ideologically-motivated symbolism have been observed at various convoy demonstrations.

SYMBOLS OBSERVED

The following section provides contextual information relating to ideologically-charged symbols which have been observed during convoy demonstrations.

DIAGOLON

DIAGOLON (adjacent to the PLAID ARMY online movement^b) is a meme-based, online satirical movement (some may refer to this as a group, more analysis by IMCIT is required) which expresses desires to form a country based on conservative political ideology across several Canadian provinces and U.S. states. Its flag, a white diagonal line across a black backdrop, symbolizes the regions in Canada and

^a Dynamic factors include: the number of people in the crowd, the ongoing circulation of misinformation, exhaustion, substance abuse, potential for altercations amongst counter-protesters and with law enforcement, and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers.

^b The PLAID ARMY is an online content channel whose creator often references DIAGOLON in his podcasts. The PLAID ARMY content has been criticized over racially-charged and violent content in the past.

the U.S. where DIAGOLON adherents perceive as holding like-minded values rooted in defiance against “politically correct” culture.

Social media accounts associated to DIAGOLON¹ often espouse anti-authority and anti-government sentiments, at times in blatant terms referencing violent accelerationism, under the guise of humour.² Self-described “bigot” meetups have been promoted on DIAGOLON social media.

Several figures in the DIAGOLON movement have been observed in Ottawa. One figure had previously been arrested in January 2022 for firearms offences³ and has been observed in Ottawa, frequently posting online to warn supporters of imminent law enforcement action against the convoy demonstrations, and denouncing police enforcement of such as illegal.⁴



Figure 1. DIAGOLON flag observed at a protest. Source: <https://twitter.com/tincanfire/status/1492965767670910979/photo/1>

The seizure of a cache of weapons and ammunition by RCMP “K” Division at the Coutts blockade on February 14 included a body armour vest adorned with patches of the DIAGOLON flag.⁵ (See “WEAPONS”, below.)

CANADA FIRST

CANADA FIRST is a self-described nationalist online content channel inspired by AMERICA FIRST, a network of alt-right U.S.-based personalities who have expressed ethno-nationalist sentiments.⁶ The CANADA FIRST flag depicts the letter “C” encircling a white maple leaf and a white letter “F” against a red backdrop. Baseball hats with the words CANADA FIRST in white on red fabric have also been observed at convoy protests.



Figure 2. A CANADA FIRST flag seen at a protest. Source: Personal Info.

The lead content creator for CANADA FIRST has been criticized for espousing views against immigration and, like DIAGOLON, is known for making offensive and, at times, references to violence under the guise of sarcasm or humour.⁷

One supporter of CANADA FIRST, who is accused of throwing rocks at the Prime Minister during the election campaign in September 2021⁸, has been observed in Ottawa during convoy demonstrations.⁹

KINGDOM OF CANADA

A self-described “Queen” and Head-of-State of the “KINGDOM OF CANADA” has been observed in Ottawa during convoy demonstrations. This individual espouses conspiratorial-based rhetoric denouncing democratically-elected leaders and public health officials as false, and followers are responsible for a nationwide “cease and desist” lettering campaign ordering an end to all COVID-19 protocols.¹⁰

The self-described “Queen” has made statements in the past referencing using violence to end vaccine mandates and testing.¹¹ In November of 2021, the leader was detained by RCMP and later released following alleged threats to healthcare workers.¹² One supporter was arrested in December 2021 after threatening to bring a firearm to a school that had announced holding a vaccine clinic for children.¹³

The self-described “Queen” and her supporters have been observed in Ottawa during convoy demonstrations¹⁴ donning purple flags with a white maple leaf overlaid with a gold sword. The presence of this individual at convoy demonstrations may escalate tensions with other protesters, as “KINGDOM OF CANADA” adherents were criticized for burning the Canadian flag at Parliament Hill.



Figure 3. “KINGDOM OF CANADA” flags flown near Parliament Hill.
Source: <https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/02/04/that-horn-is-designed-to-be-a-wake-up-call-a-journey-through-the-streets-of-ottawa-during-the-freedom-rally-occupation/342334>

THREE PERCENTERS

In Ottawa, one truck participating in the convoy was found displaying a THREE PERCENTERS (III%) flag.¹⁵ Inspired by the American anti-government and militia movement, chapters of the Three Percenters in Canada espoused anti-immigration and anti-Islam views in the past and were listed as a terrorist entity in Canada in 2021.¹⁶

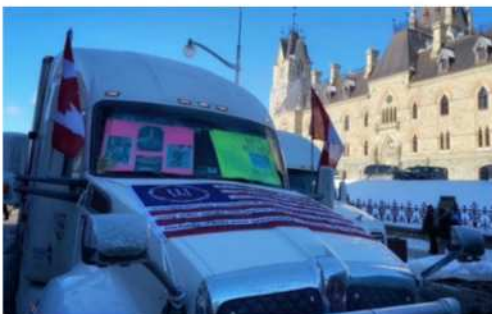


Figure 4. American III% flag on a truck in Ottawa. Source: <https://twitter.com/NewPatchMamma/status/1488541557565362183>

No other references to the THREE PERCENTERS have been noted at convoy protests in recent days, however, and the THREE PERCENTERS have not had visible presence in Canada since being listed as a terrorist entity.

OTHER SYMBOLS OBSERVED DURING THE PROTESTS

Not all protesters carrying ideologically-motivated symbols adhere to specific, identifiable groups. The following flags have been observed in the National Capital Region (NCR) during convoy demonstrations which do not necessarily correlate with alignment to any single ideological group or movement.

GADSDEN FLAG

The Gadsden flag was created by American independence-oriented colonists during the U.S. Revolutionary War. On its own, the flag does not contain references to race and is often used as a symbol for libertarianism. In recent years, the use of the flag by racially and ethno-nationalist groups have associated the flag with white supremacist movements in some contexts.¹⁷ Flags typically depict a snake on a yellow background with the caption “DON’T TREAD ON ME”. Variations of the flag include a black-coloured background and a version with a Canadian goose in place of the snake.



Figure 5. Black Gadsden flag. Source: Personal Info.



Figure 6. Yellow Canadian-variant Gadsden flag. Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canadian-cities-brace-more-anti-vaccine-mandate-protests-2022-02-05/>

CONFEDERATE FLAG

The Confederate flag was flown by Confederate states and its military during the American Civil War as a battle flag. As the Southern Confederate states were motivated to keep the institution of slavery, the modern use of the Confederate flag has been associated as idealizing rebellious spirit or rural heritage in some contexts, or as a symbol of slavery and white supremacy in other contexts.¹⁸

The Confederate flag has been observed during convoy demonstrations in Ottawa.



Figure 7. Confederate flags observed in Ottawa. Source: <https://pressprogress.ca/anti-vax-convoy-leader-says-he-welcomes-protesters-displaying-confederate-flags-in-ottawa/>

NAZI SYMBOLISM

The use of the swastika was adopted by the German Nazi party to represent its fascist regime centering on ethnic cleansing. Its modern use in Western countries is nearly universally regarded as a symbol of hate. The image to the right depicts its use during a convoy demonstration in Ottawa.



Figure 8. Swastika observed in Ottawa. Source: <https://twitter.com/jaybaltz/status/1487520707445764112>



Figure 9. SS Bolts observed in Ottawa. Source: <https://theconversation.com/freedom-convoy-rolls-through-ottawa-encouraging-the-participation-of-canadas-far-right-175902>



Figure 10. Syringe swastika on Canadian flag. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/HuntersForAFreeCanada/>



Figure 11. Star of David used by a self-described unvaccinated individual. Source: https://www.reddit.com/r/ontario/comments/srnh62/im_ashamed_that_this_is_coming_out_of_my_country/

The movement, given its perceived support by national and international supporters, may be emboldening certain individuals to visibility express their ideologically motivated beliefs.

CONVOY FINANCING

Convoy financial support has likely strengthened demonstrators resolve, despite recent developments with fundraising sites.

Media reporting on Monday and Tuesday indicated that the crowdfunding website GiveSendGo, which hosted a Freedom Convoy financing effort, was the subject of a cyber attack in which the donors' personal information was obtained and subsequently leaked¹⁹. The released data accounts for 92,844 donations for the period of 2-10 February, totalling \$8,421,806²⁰.

Through the media's analysis of names, postal codes and email addresses associated with each donation, open source reporting identified 51,666 donators as originating from the U.S. (56% of the total), while 36,202 were from Canada (39%)²¹. Canadians donated more money, however, accounting for over 50% of donations, or \$4.3 million. American donators collectively gave \$3.6 million dollars, or 43% of the collected sum²². Other donations came from jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland²³.

The majority of donations were for amounts lower than \$100 (81,402 donations, or 88% overall), however donations over \$100 account for more than half of the funds collected, while the top 1% of donors contributed over 20% of the total funds²⁴. The largest donation was \$215,000 USD, but was anonymous in nature and could not be traced to a specific country. The second largest donation was of \$90,000 USD and is associated with an American billionaire who owns an artificial intelligence company²⁵. A Canadian businessman from New Brunswick was responsible for a \$75,000 donation²⁶. Some email addresses in the list of donations are associated with employees of several U.S. government agencies, including the Department of Justice, NASA, the military, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Transport Security Administration²⁷.

Media reports indicate that 1500 comments associated with the donations directly named Prime Minister Justin TRUDEAU, but do not specify whether any could be construed as threats²⁸. While most of the comments that accompanied the donations were innocuous, some referred to Donald TRUMP or the QAnon conspiracy, while others were violent or threatening²⁹ (e.g.,: "I look forward to the day you tyrants are swinging from a noose"; "Cabal piglets are corrupt criminals who need severe punishment under law"; "Death to all liberal traitors" as examples³⁰.)

The government on Monday announced measures under the *Emergencies Act* that would apply to crowdfunding sites like GiveSendGo³¹. Under the new rules, these sites would have to register with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre (FINTRAC) and report large and suspicious transactions. The rule would also apply to transactions using digital assets, like crypto currencies. Under the emergency rules, the government could also order financial institutions to freeze bank accounts that are linked to the protest³².

At the time of this writing, the RCMP has received three related FINTRAC disclosures which are now under investigation.

POTENTIAL USE OF WEAPONS

On February 14, RCMP "K" Division in Alberta (AB) announced a seizure of a number of firearms and ammunition from convoy vehicles at the Coutts blockade, referencing that some protesters displayed willingness to use force against police should enforcement of the blockade occur.³³ One body armour vest seized during the investigation³⁴ included patches signifying adherence to the DIAGOLON movement, which has prior histories of referencing the use of violence in order to oppose what they perceive as government overreach. The RCMP continues to investigate.



Figure 22. Body armour with DIAGOLON patches seized at the Coutts blockade.

Source: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2022/alberta-rcmp-make-arrests-coutts-border-blockade>

CONVOY LOGISTICAL STATIONS

Several logistical stations have been set up by convoy supporters in the NCR to provide material support to demonstrators. Encampments have been observed to include indicators for long-term occupations such as the use of portable toilets, food supplies and preparation, and fuel stockpiles. One encampment on Bronson Avenue was dismantled by police on the weekend.³⁵



Figure 13. Encampment at Coventry Road. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPv5FKr-OPU>

The presence of an encampment doubling as a supply station at 302 Coventry Road (above) for convoy demonstrators in the NCR has been reported in news media and open sources. Specific activities of imminent concern or threats against law enforcement have not been observed in open sources. Photos and narratives of the activities at the Coventry encampment depict it as a staging ground for the convoy with multiple tent structures, well-stocked food preparation areas, stockpiles of fuel, and regularly-serviced portable toilets.³⁶

Based on social media posts, children appear to be intermittently present at the camp, which may pose additional operational enforcement challenges.³⁷ Over the past week, counter-protesters have attempted to obstruct Coventry Road and surrounding roads to prevent convoy vehicles from moving to downtown Ottawa³⁸, which raises potential for escalating public safety concerns.

NCR convoy organizers may also be using the ARC Hotel at 140 Slater Street as a “war room”.³⁹ Another protest camp (“Commander Center 2”) was established at a private farm field in Embrun ON, approximately 30 minutes’ drive from Ottawa and is managed by a volunteer group and the “Adopt-A-Trucker” support campaign.⁴⁰ Logistical support provided by former military and law enforcement to convoy organizers and occupation-style encampments providing material support highlight an increasing level of sophistication and organization among the movement.

POTENTIAL INSIDER THREAT CONCERNS

For several months, IMCIT has been aware of several high profile websites opposing vaccine mandates and public health restrictions that appear to attract serving and former military and law enforcement individuals. As a result, narratives questioning the loyalty and authority of police have been circulating

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on social media surrounding convoy demonstrations in recent days. Claims from individuals with law enforcement and military backgrounds equating vaccine mandates and related restrictions to government authoritarianism have lent perceptions of legitimacy to the overall anti-public health movement which holds similar grievances. Comments supporting convoy demonstrations from specific individuals with professional backgrounds in sensitive law enforcement and military roles are likely to generate perceptions that enforcement personnel are fragmented over vaccine mandates and may raise criticisms from convoy demonstrators over the legitimate authority of police.

Some individuals, referencing that they have former law enforcement or military experience, appear to be providing direct logistical support to convoy demonstrations and may be leveraging their formal training and tactical experience to guide the movement's next steps. The assistance of such individuals supporting the demonstrations underscores the possibility for insider threats, as it may inspire ideologically motivated individuals to recruit past or present members of law enforcement or government organizations whose skill sets could be leveraged to circumvent enforcement action.

Whether real or perceived, key convoy figures have suggested that "sources inside the police infrastructure" are providing convoy supporters with updates about law enforcement strategies. A screenshot of an internal email from the Ottawa Public Transit Service asking for work availabilities to transport Ottawa Police resources the following week was posted to Twitter on February 7, which may indicate potential information breaches occurring from within city services.

The IMCIT is also aware of daily "intelligence reports" produced by convoy organizers, uploaded to a public-accessible online shared drive. The content of such reports have, at this time, offered minimal information of value, consisting primarily of weather forecasts, publicly-available news reporting about convoy events, and general commentary in support of the convoy movement. The online shared drive where these reports are uploaded are associated to a convoy organizer who identifies as a former RCMP employee and military intelligence officer with a professional background in national security, which further underscores the capability of skilled individuals within the movement to conduct counter-intelligence in anticipation of upcoming enforcement strategies.

The IMCIT is liaising with law enforcement partners to maintain visibility on events related to the convoy events which are occurring nationally, and will provide updates as required.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ Instagram: @diagonalneverdies, @ragingdissident2, @ferrymans_toll; ragingdissident.com

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtlllVU17rk> ; [Odysee.com/@EastCoastCanadian:6/boog-to-the-future-the-plaid-army-movie:d](https://odysee.com/@EastCoastCanadian:6/boog-to-the-future-the-plaid-army-movie:d)

³ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8593064/ns-man-ottawa-convoy-protest-firearms-charge/>

⁵ <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2022/alberta-rcmp-make-arrests-coutts-border-blockade>

⁶ <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/groyper-army-and-america-first>

⁷ Twitter: @CanadaFirstt; Instagram: **Personal Info.**

- ⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/former-ppc-staffer-accused-of-throwing-gravel-at-justin-trudeau-makes-brief-court-appearance-1.6201968>
- ⁹ Instagram @_sons.of.liberty, https://www.instagram.com/p/CZaN8_7jt1S/
- ¹⁰ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/completely-false-anti-vaccine-cease-and-desist-order-prompts-complaints-to-police-1.6088212>
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